



## CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE

Paper for the Cafcass Board 1 July 2020

### UPDATE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

#### KEY POINTS

- Section 3 of the report describes our continued handling of the COVID – 19 crisis, setting out the main areas of **leadership focus** over the last period (**the well – being of staff, managing the return to face to face work, negotiating the impact of demand and less court capacity**) and the **priorities for recovery** (**assessing internal capacity, prioritising new work and protocols for attending court, seeing children and opening offices**).
- Section 4 (PRACTICE) provides a **summary of demand from the emergent MoJ system recovery data dashboard** and updates the board on our work to develop the **family forum**. There are currently **32,537 open active cases, the highest level on record with sharp increases in open cases +7.5% (2,280 cases) since February 2020**
- Section 5 (PEOPLE) refers to our **action planning in respect of diversity** (featured on the main board agenda today), updates the board on the **recruitment of a new head of human resources** and provides the **headlines from our recent all staff survey**.
- The **commencement and cessation of an allowance for staff working at home** is set out in section 6 (PARTNERS), with an **update on the recently published MoJ Harm panel report and our next steps**
- Sections 7 and 8 summarise the latest timeline and activity for the **Annual report, the Information Commissioner and Ofsted**
- The latest **budget summary, an impact assessment (including early headlines from the child and family feedback trial) and an analysis of risk** are set out in section, 9-11.

#### AIM AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide an overview of our leadership during the COVID – 19 crisis and to describe its impact on the organisation. Additional business as usual issues are set out in accordance with our strategic priority areas, practice, people and partners.
- 2 **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BOARD**
  - 2.1 To note this overview and to seek any required clarification accordingly.

### 3. COVID-19: Leadership and communications

- 3.1 At the board briefing on 21 May 2020, members were provided with a rolling update of our actions in response to the COVID - 19 crisis and associated issues which remain our most pressing challenge.

**Gold command continues to meet three times a week**, supported by our Incident Management Team which functions as our silver command and also meets three times weekly – now with a sub – group on recovery planning. COVID – 19 specific communication remains a twice weekly endeavour and board members are provided with both communications briefings each week. Appendix A summarises for the period May-June.

Our leadership and communications at this time focus around **three themes** for the most part: the **well – being of staff, managing the return to face to face work and negotiating the impact of demand and less court capacity**. In addition, we have as the board is aware, been leading responses to the **MoJ harm panel report** (set out later in the paper) and a change programme regarding our diversity and inclusion strategy (set out in section 6 below).

My report sets out in some detail the arrangements we are making in respect of the issues referred to in the paragraph above, but it is important to note that as the purity of lockdown has diluted, **levels of anxiety within our organisation have naturally increased as have the volume and complexity of the decisions we are now having to make**. This of course is in parallel to the uncertainties that all colleagues have in their lives regarding school and childcare, their own health vulnerabilities and record volumes of work to manage. Whilst I am **confident that we are resilient and managing as an organisation, for leaders and managers, in particular, we are overseeing a highly sensitised work environment which is a strain for everyone**, but I would assert is a greater strain for managers – particularly at the frontline of business support and operations. We are considering (alongside our response to the all staff survey), **a range of additional benefits that we will offer to try to ease the pressure as much as we are able. We will report this to the board in our August briefing.**

### 3.2 Recovery planning

Our **staff absence (as throughout the crisis) remains remarkably low at 4.2% overall**. Board members receive the weekly summary monitored by GOLD command. Our capacity pressures are emerging now as we navigate childcare challenges, a range of staff unable to undertake face to face work, accumulating annual leave and the potential impact of track and trace measures. **A capacity tool has been developed to support managers to assess the impact of these enduring issues on an employee's personal circumstances and therefore their capacity to undertake their work, including meeting children and families in person and attending court**. It also records information about actions managers have taken to support employees to continue in their role and maximise availability. Once this has been implemented across the organisation, it will inform where we need to develop specific policies and our strategic response. Testing is being carried out at the time of writing, ahead of a proposed rollout to all managers later in July. This is seen as a priority in order that we can be clear about our actual capacity, the impact attributable to Cafcass for any delays to children in family proceedings and the responses we make to individual staff who are unable to carry out their duties either partially or wholly.

Our planning in respect of **prioritising work due to the record volume of open cases** at this time is the subject of a full agenda item on the board programme today and so is not set out in any detail here. This is, however, our central response to managing both the demand and slow throughput of the family courts in partnership with the family justice system and government sponsors.

Our **three recovery protocols, attending court, seeing children and families and opening offices** are either signed off or close to being so. Our **attending court protocol is live on our website** and has been shared with key partners. We are expecting to attend court remotely until the end of August unless ordered to do otherwise by the court. Arrangements are clearly set out in the document as to the actions that need to be taken should we need to attend in person.

Our **framework for seeing children and families again is in its final stages of development, having been the subject of eight internal staff consultations** (see appendix c to this report) and **discussion among judicial colleagues**. This protocol sets out the need for us to see children in person where we judge this to be required and it is in their best interests. Given that **this marks the start again of our face to face work**, it has implications for the opening of offices, individual health risk assessments for staff and risk assessments for the visits themselves. **Key among a suite of guidance and forms is a principle that professional judgement and the rationale for doing or not doing something must be clearly recorded in each case. We are operating this protocol on the basis that we have a statutory duty to see children, to assess their safety, their needs, their wishes and feelings, their hopes for the future and to present this to the court.** We will retain a mix of 'seeing' children, since remote contact works so positively in many cases. Our FCAs are very clear when this is not appropriate and will record their rationale on file. If a subsequent risk assessment indicates that a visit is not possible in person, our default would be to return to remote options, **considering our final position in terms of the impact of delay to the child/ren.** Again, the rationale for this will be clear and in exceptional circumstances where a visit has to be undertaken and cannot be by the allocated FCA, we will either make arrangements for another FCA to do it (observed by the allocated FCA) or for the court to be asked for a new FCA to be appointed. This is our least preferred option given the delay this will build for the children. **We intend to finalise our position on this during the week commencing 29 June and to publish the protocol accordingly.**

In parallel, our **protocol for opening offices** at the same time will also publish and will set out that the primary purpose for their opening is to facilitate the safe 'seeing' of children and their families. There will be business support staff available to support FCAs undertaking interviews in offices and a range of assessments and guidance have also been developed to enable this all to happen safely. This too will be a published document during the week of 29 June. **Trades unions and our legal advisors, Weightmans and our health and safety colleagues have been fully sighted on this developing work.** These protocols have required a significant amount of heavy lifting from silver command colleagues and others. **I am grateful for their efforts and patience in their development** They are critical recovery content and required skill and collaboration in abundance to produce.

At the time of writing, the **family justice system more widely is continuing to bring itself back to life, though the courts are still operating way below capacity. There is considerable concern about the building backlogs and delay in the system. The technology is not yet in place in all courts to facilitate remote hearings by video which is fundamental for more complex hearings.** It is now accepted that we will be **living with remote courts until at least the end of 2020 and possibly beyond.** The details remain far from settled, but the board should be reassured that we chair the national recovery group which has senior members of the Judiciary, MoJ, DfE, ADCS, ADSS, Cafcass Cymru and HMCTS in weekly attendance. For now, its **priorities remain understanding the impact of COVID – 19 (through data and eventually qualitative feedback), prioritising work and backlogs and looking after the well – being of staff.**

We continue to work closely with ADCS on two projects, the first being 'good enough remote assessments' and the second, a national snapshot on the building public law

delays. Recovery work is a leadership priority for us alongside a commitment to our staff that any changes will be clear, balanced on their well-being and the needs of families and children.

## 4. PRACTICE

### 4.1 Demand and data headlines

In this report, an overview of the impact of COVID – 19 on the family justice system is provided below, informed by a combination of our own headlines and those from the MoJ Family Justice System Impact of Covid – 19 Data Dashboard. The demand data that board members will be more familiar with is set out in the practice prioritisation paper also on the agenda for this meeting.

#### From the dashboard (22 June 2020):

- **Demand** has broadly returned to pre-Covid levels and **continues to outstrip capacity** to resolve cases, **with considerable regional variation**
- There are currently **32,537 open active cases, the highest level on record with sharp increases in open cases +7.5% (2,280 cases) since February 2020**
- **Active caseloads (non-EIT staff), national average now 23.5 cases, with 71.5% of qualifying staff holding >20 cases Highest levels on record**
- **Visible increase in EIT active caseloads**, these are now an average of 49.3 case, **+9.3% in the last four weeks**
- Overall, the number of **hearings projected for June 2020** where Cafcass has an involvement has recovered and is **+12.3% compared to June 2019**
- Prioritisation and relative capacity means **private law outstanding cases are growing fastest**
- Growth in outstanding cases is mainly older cases - intelligence suggests that **more complex cases are being adjourned**
- **Delays, adjournments, cancelations, and technological issues** are slowing throughput of cases
- **Fact finding** (Private law) and **final hearings** (Public and Private law) are **most disrupted**, but with considerable local variation
- **Judicial capacity**, particularly at lower tiers, **is considerably reduced**
- More court buildings are opening but **social distancing** means capacity continues to be reduced

### 4.2 Family Forum

I am pleased to report that we are now returning in earnest to progressing the Family Forum. An important step has been the appointment of a full time Family Forum Facilitator, Jennifer Okoro Thompson who has been released for a period of 12 months from her role as a Family Court Adviser in the London private law team.

Jennifer took up post on 1 June and reports to Lolita Gerald, recently appointed Assistant Director who will act as Project Lead for the Family Forum, with additional support from

Sophie Cappleman in the policy team who coordinates our quarterly feedback and learning from complaints, compliments and other feedback. We are delighted with the combined strengths of our Family Forum project team.

The partner development day has been redesigned as a virtual event and is scheduled to take place on 17 July with involvement from Cafcass staff, partner organisations with experience of parent and family participation, and the Family Justice Young People's Board. The day will reaffirm our commitment to making the Family Forum a reality early in the strategic plan and will involve an update on how our thinking has developed since the first development event in December 2019.

We will set out how we plan to start by holding some 'restorative panels' to hear directly from family members involved in cases where we have identified (through complaints or other means) that our service fell short. The primary purpose of the panels will be to fully hear and acknowledge the impact on family members, consider whether we need to do anything further to resolve issues for the family and identify learning that will lead to systemic change. A secondary purpose will be to act as recruitment pathway to the Family Forum: these panels will be an essential step to building deeper trust with families who may not have previously felt heard, and we think this will be an important first step to identifying people who will be prepared to work with us to improve how we understand and learn from the impact our service has. We will also seek to identify members of the Forum who have had positive experiences and will continue to draw feedback and learning from wider sources, through our Family Forum Partners.

Given our proposed approach, we have invited Mark Finnis, an expert in Restorative Practice, to provide us with an introductory workshop on this approach and how it can be applied to the Family Forum to engage children and families. On the virtual day, we will engage the group in an exercise involving two anonymised case journeys, synthesised from feedback and complaints Cafcass has received in the recent past. The group will divide into smaller groups for reflective discussion to link the learning from Mark's presentation to the case journey examples and inform the design of the restorative panels, including what would need to happen before, during and after.

### **4.3 STRATEGIC PLANNING 2020-23**

Delivery of the priority projects supporting the nine delivery priorities in our strategic plan has begun. Some projects have been re-scoped to ensure that Year 1 deliverables have taken account of the organisation's reduced capacity following the impact of Covid-19, or to ensure that work assisting the organisation's response and recovery are prioritised. A few of the projects are of particular strategic importance – such as the family forum, workforce strategy, diversity and longer term reform of the family justice system - and will be sponsored by named board members who have particular expertise to offer as they progress. All Board members will receive quarterly updates on progress, with a more comprehensive mid- year review in October and an end year review in March. A summary of the delivery priorities will be published in September to coincide with the release of the Annual Report and Accounts. Appendix B carries a summary of priorities.

## 5. PEOPLE

### 5.1 Diversity and inclusion

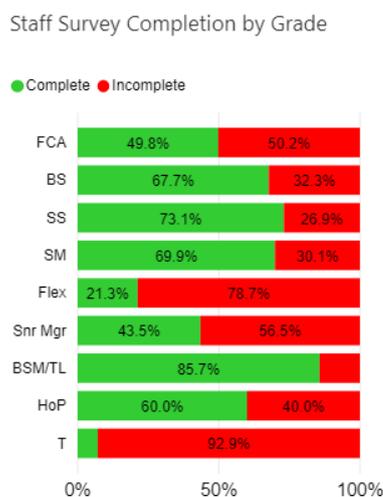
A substantive item is on today's board agenda. Members will hear about our plans for a renewed diversity and inclusion strategy, the work for which had begun prior to the COVID crisis and which is now being supplemented by our actions in response to the Black Lives Matter movement. The details of our current survey for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff in response to the Public Health England (PHE) report will also be described in the context of our intended response. Colleagues from our Kaleidoscope network (the outgoing and incoming chairs) will also be in attendance for this item and I would like to express my thanks here to both Lolita Gerald and Carole Hazelwood – Morris for their continuing work and commitment helping to embed and improve our change programme for practice and professional experiences here at Cafcass.

### 5.2 Recruitment of a new Head of HR

We are delighted to announce that Nikki Gibbons has joined Cafcass as our new Head of HR and OD. Nikki worked most recently at Bracknell Forest as Director of HR, OD and Transformation with previous senior HR leadership roles in a number of local authorities. We are both grateful and sad to be losing James Hyde who has worked tirelessly for Cafcass for many years and I record my deepest thanks to him here. I was also very impressed with the executive search agency – the McClean Partnership who we secured to help us with this senior appointment. The process was handled professionally, diligently and with haste.

### 5.3 Staff survey June 2020

In order to secure a comprehensive plan for recovery taking account of the well-being of our staff, we undertook an all staff survey between 15 May and 9 June. Overall 1089 staff completed the survey which is 54.5% of the workforce currently in work. The table below shows the breakdown of survey completion by grade:



We asked questions relating to:

- How colleagues were managing work
- How supported and connected they feel
- Whether colleagues were feeling impacted by non-work issues

- How new starters were feeling
- What is currently working well
- The impact on children and families and how we could improve remote working

**Key headlines** from the survey included:

- 88% agreed or strongly agreed that they feel supported and can raise issues easily
- 85% agreed or strongly agreed that their work priorities are clear
- 86% agreed or strongly agreed that they are well communicated with about pandemic plans
- The level of concern about returning to normal working arrangements was split with 34% very worried, 23% neutral and 43% not worried.
- 69% agreed/strongly agreed that senior leaders are visible and accessible
- 43% did not agree that they have a good work/life balance
- 24% were worried about the current quality of their work
- 16% want help with technology to help them work remotely

The most significant non – work related issues worrying our colleagues, related to relationship difficulties, being a carer, having difficulty sleeping, being worried about the longer term impact of COVID on well – being and childcare responsibilities.

We have shared the headlines with our staff and are now analysing the more granular data with a report expected back to gold at the end of June. We are taking action in respect of concerns about return to work (addressed in the seeing children and opening offices protocols), our plans to prioritise the cases of the most vulnerable children are an attempt to control caseloads for social work practitioners and we are addressing worries about quality in part through allowing visits to children again but also through a revised quality oversight programme. **The actions we need to take will be a mix of national and regional solutions and we will present back to the board, a fuller plan in August. In addition, we are aware that our managers are feeling particularly stretched and we need to take some specific actions in response. This will form part of our well- being recovery plan to be brought to the board also in August.**

## 6. PARTNERS

### 6.1 Treatment of costs incurred by staff while working from home

In response to the impact of COVID 19 upon its workforce, Gold command agreed to introduce a Home Working allowance to all staff, effective from 23 March 2020 until the end of June 2020.

The allowance equated to £6 per week in line with HMRC tax guidance, for a limited period only and reviewable on a monthly basis. The payment was made as an allowance within the principles of Cafcass existing Expense Reimbursement Policy and understood to have no bearing on employee terms and conditions or the pay and reward framework. The payment was declared in all returns to the MoJ who wrote to us in June advising that because the allowance was a fixed amount, paid to all staff via payroll and did not cover specific receipted expenses incurred, it would have to be classed as an allowance as per Civil Service Pay Guidance also requiring Ministerial clearance. MoJ also informed us that

in consequence of our decision, the Department had been exposed to the risk of incurring a HMT / Cabinet Office breach as pay remit guidance has not been followed.

The Director of Resources and I met with the Chief Financial officer and the Chief People officer at the MoJ on 10 June and agreed that whilst we had made the payment in good faith and following guidance that we believed to be clear, we should cease paying from end June. Our staff were advised on 12 June and a letter confirming our action was dispatched. We are awaiting Cabinet office guidance on the arrangements for home working expenses and which is expected in September. Naturally, our staff expressed their disappointment and it is important that we do revisit it as soon as the guidance is received and in concert with the MoJ.

## 6.2 System leadership and reform

As described in all reports through the crisis, our partnership and close working in family justice has been strong and our role in the leadership of recovery and reform remains significant. Our weekly recovery meetings continue and have full attendance at the most senior level from our partners. We are working closely with ADCS on the Public Law Snapshot previously described and with MOJ to prepare for the Family Justice Reform implementation board which meets on 15 July to be followed by a national family justice board meeting at the end of July. Our work with both the public and private law working groups continues. The need for urgent reform of the system has never been more visible than it is now with growing backlogs, little prospect of less demand and the certain prospect that we will be unable to allocate all work in the near future. Not only does this carry risk for families and children, it has serious implications for the long term outcomes for many of the most vulnerable children. We intend to continue to lobby ministers hard for urgent reform.

## 6.3 Domestic Abuse and the Ministry of Justice Harm Panel report

The Harm Panel report was published on 25 June, one week earlier than expected. Board members received our internal and external statements, our handling plan and 'lines to take' if asked. The report shines a light on current failings in the family justice system, which are identified as systemic across the judiciary, Cafcass, local authority social workers, lawyers and experts. The four identified failings are:

- **Resource constraints;** less resource is available when demand is at its highest and more parties are coming to court unrepresented
- **Pro-contact culture;** courts place priority on ensuring contact with the non-resident parent and the system is structured in a way to minimise allegations of domestic abuse
- **Working in silos;** differences in approaches and culture between criminal justice, child protection and family law, including a lack of communication and coordination between family courts and other agencies working with families, leading to contradictory decisions and confusion
- **An adversarial system;** putting one parent against another in what is not always a level playing field, with little or no involvement of the child

The key criticisms of Cafcass in the report include a suggestion that we manipulate children, don't see them alone, conduct insensitive and inadequate risk telephone calls, fail to act on reported abuse and are inadequately trained to conduct risk assessments. 9 of the 14 recommendations are particularly relevant to Cafcass, and many are aligned with our own strategic priorities or improvements we have identified through the Private Law Working Group. The report concludes that families need a better resourced system, based on more comprehensive assessments of the family dynamics. It calls for more time spent with children by social workers and recommends that legal processes are complemented by therapeutic interventions to respond to the causes as well the consequences of domestic abuse in all its forms.

Whilst we have said publicly that we do not accept that the report accurately describes the quality of our practice, we are disappointed that there are families and children who say they have experienced a less than helpful service from us. Furthermore, we accept that there is much we can and must do to improve our practice and the work we undertake with families. We intend to take this feedback seriously, starting with a review of the quality and impact of our current work. We will involve our specialist partners and frontline staff in scoping the review which will drive the first phase of our improvement programme. Our proposed next steps are to:

- Conduct a Learning Review reflecting on the findings of the Harm Panel in relation to our practice
- Establish a Learning and Improvement Board - chaired by Jacky Tiotto with membership including local authorities and charities (SafeLives, Women's Aid, Families Need Fathers) to oversee practice improvements that arise from the review and our mainstreamed quality assurance programmes
- Improve our understanding of the flow and handling of domestic abuse work into Cafcass
- Influence wider reforms to the Family Justice System through our role on the national Family Justice Board, Family Justice Reform Implementation Group and Private Law Working Group.

We will provide the board with regular updates in the months ahead regarding progress with our improvement and learning programme.

## **7. ORGANISATION**

### **7.1 Annual report and accounts**

The final report was presented to Audit and Risk Committee (ARAC) on 22 June and cleared for sign off and has been submitted to the Board for final approval of the commentary. However, National Audit Office has not yet been able to issue its certificate because extensions granted as part of Covid-19 regulations have delayed the availability of information needed by the NAO to conclude their audit of the Pension Liability until August 2020. We anticipate being able to lay the final report before Parliament in early September 2020.

### **7.2 Information Commissioner**

The ICO informed us at the end of May that they intended to review the action plan prepared following the audit that took place in 2019. On 5 June they were provided with the document which details those recommendations which have been completed and those which remain outstanding, together with a significant amount of written evidence to support the work that has been done since the audit.

The ICO requested a small amount of additional evidence and have now responded to say that they acknowledge the progress Cafcass is making towards completing all the actions in the plan, at the same time acknowledging that there is further work to be done. The work towards completing all the recommendations in the action plan continues.

A meeting was arranged with MoJ and HMCTS following their receipt of our letter about the status of two high risk areas: the validation of personal data received by Cafcass and the management of the paper archive, at which HMCTS confirmed their position on whether they are able to validate information on application forms before it is forwarded to Cafcass.

This was reflected back to the ICO in the covering letter which accompanied the action plan. The ICO have since written to confirm that their review is complete and the engagement with Cafcass is complete. There will be no further reviews. The audit was a constructive process for Cafcass, and we maintained a very positive relationship with the ICO throughout.

## 8. Inspection

A review meeting was held with Ofsted on 25 June to discuss our response to the COVID crisis and the impact on our inspection timeline. Understandably, the timetable has moved forward by some months. It is now anticipated that Ofsted will consult on the draft framework for Cafcass inspection in September with a concluded process in January 2021. We will submit as planned our self-evaluation for mid -December with our annual engagement meeting scheduled for January 2021. A focused visit is likely in the spring of 2021 with the theme to be drawn from our self – evaluation.

## 9. Budget update

We have updated our forecasts for the current year which indicate a broadly similar position to that reported in my May board briefing. For now, the impact of changes in spending brought about through our response to Covid-19 have been broadly neutral and so our underlying forecast remains c£0.6m above our grant allocation, being the amount by which it fell short of our submissions for a safe minimum budget. There is a Finance Report elsewhere on the agenda today.

## 10. IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The impact of the COVID–19 crisis on our work continues to be on a scale that we have not known before. The board will recall that in my last report, I set out our intention to try to understand children’s experiences of the crisis as part of our emerging feedback trial. I am pleased to report that from 18 May – 12 June, we asked families and children about their experiences of remote direct working. Family Court Advisers (FCAs) completed interviews with children and families in private and public law cases, following any direct work sessions. The purpose of these interviews was to help us better understand how we’re working as a remote workforce, what we’re doing well, and what could be done better.

In summary:

- FCAs completed **186 interviews with children and families**; 46% of which were with adults or children from the same family. **Two thirds of interviews were with adults, and a third with children.**
- Sixty-nine percent of responses related to a private law application and 31% to public law.
- The most frequently used methods to carry out remote direct work were video conferencing (54%) or telephone call (43%).
- When asked what their **preferred method of contact would be, adults’ most popular response was meeting at their home (35%) and children’s most popular response was video conferencing (36%).**

- Adults gave an **average score of 8.89 out of 10 when asked how helpful the direct work session had been.** The most frequently cited way to improve this score was to have a face-to-face meeting, due to preference, to support observation of children, or to help create a more in-depth discussion. **Adults also said the session would have been improved if a clear plan had been set ahead of the session.**
- **FCAs gave an average score of 8.34 out of 10 when asked how positive the impact of their direct work session had been for the child in the case.** The most frequently cited way to improve this score was to have met with the adult or child face-to-face or resolving issues with network strength.
- **90 percent of children ‘agreed a lot’ and ‘agreed somewhat’ with the statement “my Cafcass worker listened to me”**
- **81.7% ‘agreed a lot’ and ‘agreed somewhat’ with the statement “I think my Cafcass worker will help me**
- When asked about the **impact of lockdown the most common negative feeling that children associated with lockdown was missing friends, family and school, though some did raise anxieties about themselves or family members catching coronavirus.**

We are now moving to full roll out of our feedback programme, learning from this trial. • We will be working to provide both adults and children with better information ahead of our meetings with them, specifically developing a leaflet for both and enhancing our ‘how it feels to me’ app with feedback questions. In the months ahead, we plan to systematically link feedback with the child’s electronic file so that we can routinely report on and respond to the things that children tell us need to improve. This is great progress and I am indebted to our Principal Social Worker, Sarah Parsons for prioritising this work during the crisis and doing so to such a high and impressive standard. **As I record in this section of every report, this progress and that which we have yet to make on enabling every child experiencing public or private law proceedings to receive a letter informing them of the outcome of those proceedings** would be areas of scrutiny that I would welcome from Board members in the months ahead.

## 11. FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, save those directly addressed.

## 12. RISK ANALYSIS

The significant risks associated with COVID–19 remain with us for the immediate and longer term. They require regular review and mitigation as well as strong oversight and planning. The record number of open cases, caseloads and the associated issues of staff well – being and capacity are currently our most significant risks. Discussion at today’s board meeting and the decisions we take will be critical in setting our defensible way forward.

On this basis, we will continue to operate our GOLD command to manage urgent and COVID related decisions. CMT, ECMT and OMT will be our senior leadership planning opportunities to mitigate and reduce our risks. We are in regular conversation with partners and our auditors. Our strategic and operational risk registers are current and reflect those risks which are under regular review.

### **13. DIVERSITY**

The issue of diversity both in respect of our professional practice and in the arrangements for our organisation and colleagues requires significant review. As set out in section 5, we are developing an 'action for change' programme but this of itself will not be enough to direct and sustain the progress we want to make. We are looking forward to spending further time and thought developing a longer-term plan which will require every individual working for Cafcass to learn and change. Sponsorship of this work by the board, and specifically Rohan Sivanandan in respect of diversity is positively welcome.

**Jacky Tiotto,  
Chief Executive,  
1 July 2020**